

Misguided Joy

(1 Samuel 4:1-11)

Yearly Theme: "Joy is..."

Series Title: *Joy in the Promise*

March 15th, 2020

Something to think about:

What do you put your faith in? What brings you joy? Did you know that sometimes we can find "Joy" in something that isn't God? Sometimes that something could even be religious. Ministries, mission trips and even worship services can be turned into idols if we don't keep our relationship with Christ in focus.

It's easy for us to elevate man-made things in our lives, because those are the things that we understand. In the passage of scripture we are about to read the Israelites had begun to treat the ark of the covenant like a lucky rabbit's foot. They began to worship and find joy in the man-made box used to house the almighty God, rather than the almighty God himself. It's often easy for us to point the finger at the nation of Israel and think "how could they be so blind" and yet we do the exact same thing so very often. Let's take a look at what happens when we start to put our identity in things that are man-made.

Turn in your Bibles to: 1 Samuel 4:1-11

The key point this morning is this...

Key Point: "When the focus of our joy is on something or someone other than God, joy is just a mirage disguised as hope."

What do we take away from this?

1. We must _____ who God is.
2. _____ follows when the focus of our Joy is on something man made.
3. Even something _____ can become an _____ if it becomes the source of our Joy.

Something to take home:

Where are you today? What brings you joy? Do you receive guidance and joy directly from God through your relationship with Him? Christians so often confuse temporary happiness for Joy, which causes us to become concerned with our own physical needs or wants above all else. We often say things like "that service didn't make me feel anything" or "I'm not getting anything out of this" because we're focused only on ourselves. If we focus on what things like preaching or worship can do for us personally, then Church becomes something it was never meant to be, and the standards become too high. The very existence of those things should be to point us towards God and enhance our relationship with Him. If you allow the church to become your god then you will struggle to find Joy.

If you begin to order things in your life correctly, and acknowledge the purpose of things like the church, and scripture, and worship, and all the ministries that exist as tools to worship God, then you will start feeling Joy in the Lord in a new and exciting way.

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KICK STARTERS:

- ⇒ Define "forgetfulness?"
- ⇒ What are some things that are easy for you to forget? Why is it easy for you to forget these things?

SCRIPTURE: (Before studying this material, consider listening to the corresponding message online at: <http://www.northmaincog.org/media/sermon-media>)

1 Samuel 4:1-11

¹At that time Israel was at war with the Philistines. The Israelite army was camped near Ebenezer, and the Philistines were at Aphek. ²The Philistines attacked and defeated the army of Israel, killing 4,000 men. ³After the battle was over, the troops retreated to their camp, and the elders of Israel asked, "Why did the LORD allow us to be defeated by the Philistines?" Then they said, "Let's bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. If we carry it into battle with us, it^[a] will save us from our enemies."

⁴So they sent men to Shiloh to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD of Heaven's Armies, who is enthroned between the cherubim. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were also there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. ⁵When all the Israelites saw the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD coming into the camp, their shout of joy was so loud it made the ground shake!

⁶"What's going on?" the Philistines asked. "What's all the shouting about in the Hebrew camp?" When they were told it was because the Ark of the LORD had arrived, ⁷they panicked. "The gods have^[b] come into their camp!" they cried. "This is a disaster! We have never had to face anything like this before! ⁸Help! Who can save us from these mighty gods of Israel? They are the same gods who destroyed the Egyptians with plagues when Israel was in the wilderness. ⁹Fight as never before, Philistines! If you don't, we will become the Hebrews' slaves just as they have been ours! Stand up like men and fight!"

¹⁰So the Philistines fought desperately, and Israel was defeated again. The slaughter was great; 30,000 Israelite soldiers died that day. The survivors turned and fled to their tents. ¹¹The Ark of God was captured, and Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were killed."

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. What stood out to you about that passage?

2. What is your source of Joy?

3. Do you focus on God or on something else?

4. Have you ever been disappointed because you placed your focus on something other than God?

5. Has God ever had to let you "fall" like he did the Israelites?

6. What practices do you have in your personal life to keep God as the focus? What needs to be refocused in your life?

7. How do you separate the things of God from God himself in your life? Do the work as they are intended to in your life?

8. Are you talking to God? Are you listening to God?

SELF-EVALUATION/APPLICATION:

- ⇒ **AS CHRISTIANS** we must be able to separate God from religion. Religion is the way in which we interact with God, the way we get closer to Him, but it is not God.
- ⇒ **WE MUST BE WILLING** to acknowledge that God knows what will bring us true Joy.
- ⇒ **WE MUST NOT COMMIT** idolatry by placing our joy in something other than God.
- ⇒ **MEMORY VERSES:** *Judges 2:18-19* and *Psalms 103:1-5*.